

Reassessing Denver's Countering Violent Extremism Program

Ahnaf Kalam, Counter-Islamist Grid

ahnafkalam@gmail.com

Note: While the Countering Violent Extremism program focuses on a variety of different forms of ideological extremism, this dossier exclusively focuses on efforts in countering radical Islamist extremism.

Executive summary:

In 2016, the Denver Police Department received a \$483,000 grant to supplement its Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) program, some amount of which is going directly to extremist-linked individuals and organizations.

As outlined in the DPD's grant proposal, CVE's primary strategy is to integrate disenfranchised and poorly-integrated members of the community who are at risk of radicalization towards violent extremism. CVE's main mechanism for accomplishing this is its *Officer Education & Training* component, which seeks to build and foster relationships with at-risk individuals and communities and to demonstrate to them that law enforcement can in fact be trusted.

One at-risk group noted by DPD are those susceptible to being recruited to join foreign Islamist terrorist groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda. Accordingly, the local Muslim group designated by the DPD for the Officer Education & Training program is *Colorado Muslim Connection*, (CMC) a network of Muslims in Colorado engaged in Islamic outreach and activism efforts in the local Muslim community.

CMC is led and organized by Nadeen Ibrahim, who is the CVE Outreach Coordinator. Ibrahim is a distinguished young member of the Denver community who has received considerable recognition for her activism and involvement in the Denver community. Of utmost concern, however, are Ibrahim's and CMC's views and connections which are entirely antithetical and counterproductive to the intended objectives and outcomes of CVE's Officer Education & Training program.

Ibrahim works closely with the Colorado chapter of Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), the US affiliate organization of the Pakistani Islamist group Jamaat-e-Islami, as well as with the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) and Muslim Americans Society (MAS) – both of which have been identified by federal prosecutors as front organizations of the Muslim Brotherhood in the United States. CMC is also sponsored by ICNA.

As such, it is highly necessary that DPD reconsider Ibrahim and CMC as the designated actors responsible for CVE's community outreach, and further, that the DPD receives intensive training and education on foreign and domestic Islamist organizations, as well as the front organizations under whose guise they operate lawfully and in a seemingly benign manner.

Overview of situation:

In 2016, Denver's Police Department was one of 26 state police departments to receive a grant for a Homeland Security-sponsored Countering Violent Extremism strategy¹. In their grant proposal, DPD cites recent instances of a woman from Arvada as well as three high school students from Aurora who, in 2014, all attempted to travel to Syria to join ISIS after being radicalized online as the main reason why a grant to establish a CVE program was necessary. The main objective of DPD's proposed CVE program is to prevent violent extremism, primarily through community outreach initiatives.²

But what's missing from the 2016 CVE initiative, both in Denver and at the national level, is any sort of willingness to specifically distinguish the threats posed by Islamist extremism. Denver's CVE program echoes the language of the Obama Administration's revisions to the 2011 pilot Homeland Security CVE program, and mentions specifically that violent extremism is not limited to any one race, religion, political belief, or ideology.³ This is not only refusing to acknowledge the unique problem of Islamist radicalization in the community, but goes even further by suggesting that there is no link between violent Islamist extremism and the ideology of Islamism – even after four young people from Colorado were radicalized by Islamists and had attempted to join ISIS in a single year.

Such a claim also fails to recognize the diversity within Islam, and instead, makes Muslims out to be one monolithic group. To best navigate the vast range of ideological beliefs among the world's 1.8 billion Muslims, any initiative focused on countering Islamist extremism must understand the distinction between **Muslims**, who are all followers of Islam who range in ideology from peaceful moderates, to ISIS suicide bombers; and **Islamists**, Muslims who seek to impose, by violent or non-violent means, the imposition of Islamic law over society, and seek to impose Islam on non-Muslims.

The CVE program's community outreach initiative is aimed at creating trust between at-risk communities and law enforcement by designating a trusted, representative liaison for the

¹ Noelle Phillips, "Denver Police Land \$240K Grant to Counter Violent Extremism," The Denver Post, January 13, 2017, , accessed February 04, 2019, <https://www.denverpost.com/2017/01/13/denver-police-240k-grant-violent-extremism/>.

² "FY 2016 Countering Violent Extremism Grant Program." City and County of Denver and Denver Police Department to US Department of Homeland Security. September 6, 2016. 1331 Cherokee Street, Denver, CO.

³ Ibid.

respective communities. Specifically, with regards to Denver's Muslim community the CVE proposal fails to specify that the designated liaison *must* be a moderate as opposed to someone who is extreme in their associations and views, and nowhere are there any guidelines for what would constitute a 'moderate.'

For the position of outreach coordinator for the local Muslim community, DPD has hired Nadeen Ibrahim,⁴ a Palestinian-immigrant who runs the local group 'Colorado Muslim Connection,' which DPD also names as one of the groups that it currently has relationships with for CVE's officer education and training program.

Nadeen Ibrahim is a recent graduate from CU Denver who has garnered considerable recognition for her activism and community engagement in the Denver community. In the past, she was appointed by the mayor of Denver to serve as the commissioner for the Denver Immigrant and Refugee Commission and was a board member on the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. Currently, she studies public policy at the Blavatnik School of Government at Oxford University.⁵

A quick look at Ibrahim's resume and her accomplishments within the Denver community, one could see why somebody with credentials and a background like Ibrahim's might be the ideal candidate for this position, but a closer look at her affiliations and networks reveal a history of activities counterproductive to CVE objectives as well as links to a number of radical Islamist organizations which operate openly and lawfully within the US under the guise of benign, moderate non-profits, interest groups, and charities but whose agendas run counter to the goals of the CVE program.

Among these organizations are:

- Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA)
- Muslim Americans Society (MAS)
- Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR)
- Islamic Relief USA
- Muslim Student Association (MSA)
- The Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) Movement

Further, Colorado Muslim Connection, (CMC) the local Muslim organization fronted by Ibrahim named by DPD as a partner for its Officer Education and Training Program is sponsored by

⁴ Ibid.

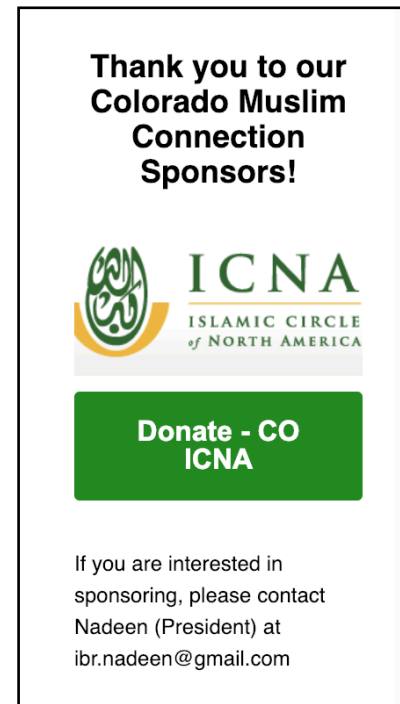
⁵ Nadeen Ibrahim's LinkedIn Profile. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nadeen-ibrahim-465534a9/>. Accessed February 4, 2019.

ICNA.⁶ As well, its website is currently non-operational, its Facebook page has not been updated since 2017, and there is currently no registered record of CMC with the Colorado Secretary of State's office.

Background on Islamist Organizations:

Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA): Islamic Circle of North America, based out of Queens, NY, was founded in 1968 as a “non-ethnic, non-sectarian, open-to-all, independent” grassroots organization whose stated objective is “to seek the pleasure of Allah [...] through the [...] establishment of the Islam in all spheres of life.”⁷ ICNA's activities include training camps, speaking events, retreats, seminars, and various forms of community outreach.⁸

ICNA was established as the American affiliate wing of Jamaat-E-Islami, (JI) the largest Islamist group in South Asia.⁹ JI is the group whose members were complicit in the genocide of up to 3 million Bangladeshis during that nation's war of independence in 1971.¹⁰ Further, JI's military wing, Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, has been designated by the U.S. State Department as a foreign terrorist organization.¹¹ Indeed, Hizb-ul-Mujahideen owned the Pakistani compound which was harboring Osama Bin Laden at his time of death.¹²



Source: Colorado Muslim Connection Newsletter. June 16, 2017 Vol. 1, Issue 29

⁶ "FY 2016 Countering Violent Extremism Grant Program." City and County of Denver and Denver Police Department to US Department of Homeland Security. September 6, 2016. 1331 Cherokee Street, Denver, CO.

⁷ "Contact Us", ICNA website. <https://www.icna.org/contact-us/>

⁸ "About Us", ICNA website. <https://www.icna.org/about-icna/>

⁹ Westrop, Sam, and Sam Westrop. "Pakistani Islamism Flourishes in America." National Review. January 24, 2018. Accessed February 11, 2019. <https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/01/pakistani-terror-groups-charitable-guises-us-funds/>.

¹⁰ "Ghulam's Jamaat: Genesis of Genocide." Dhaka Tribune. October 24, 2014. Accessed February 11, 2019. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/uncategorized/2014/10/24/ghulams-jamaat-genesis-of-genocide>.

¹¹ "State Department Terrorist Designation of Hizbul Mujahideen." U.S. Department of State. August 16, 2017. Accessed February 11, 2019. <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/08/273468.htm>.

¹² ITGD Bureau. "Osama's Hideout in Pakistan Belonged to Hizbul Mujahideen: Report." India Today. May 06, 2011. Accessed February 11, 2019. <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/americas/story/hizbul-mujahideen-owned-hideout-of-osama-in-pak-report-133130-2011-05-04>.

In 1991, ICNA was named alongside 29 other Islamic organizations identified in a Muslim Brotherhood document titled “An Explanatory Memorandum on the General Strategic Goal for the Group in North America” as an “organization of our friends” which shares its goal of indoctrinating Muslims that:

*“their work in America is a kind of grand Jihad in eliminating and destroying the Western civilization from within and sabotaging its miserable house by their hands [...] so that [...] God’s religion is made victorious over all other religions.”*¹³

In 2010, ICNA released a *Member’s Handbook* in which it explains that its ultimate goal is “the Establishment of Islam” as the basis of global governance, and further goes on to explain a five-stage program for the establishment of a global caliphate.¹⁴

Domestically, whilst operating under the guise of a benign Muslim civil interest organization, ICNA regularly invites hardline Islamists and anti-American extremists to speak openly and publicly at its events, speakers who make no secret of their problematic views and ambitions. For instance, in 2000, one Tayyib Yunus, head of ICNA’s youth division, was invited to speak at ICNA’s 25th national conference in Baltimore, where he encouraged American Muslims to go to Chechnya and wage jihad.¹⁵ In 2003, ICNA’s West Coast chapter hosted a session titled “Gone but Not Forgotten: Imam Hassan al-Banna and Maulana Maududi,” which paid tribute and respect to the founders of the Muslim Brotherhood and ICNA.¹⁶ Another ICNA conference in 2009 featured one Ragheb Elsergany, who asserted the claim that waging “jihad in the way of Allah” is the best way to “please Allah,” further clarifying that this includes providing support to “the fighters and the mujahideen [Muslim warriors] and the besieged, and those in need there in Palestine.”¹⁷ These are simply a few among many other instances of Islamist extremists speaking openly and without contest at ICNA events in the US.

ICNA In Colorado: ICNA’s relatively new Colorado chapter (ICNA-CO) is no exception. In February 2018, ICNA-CO, along with the Muslim Student Association (MSA) organized a Colorado-wide campus speaking tour for its vice president, Imam Khalid Griggs, titled “History

¹³ “Explanatory Memorandum by Muslim Brotherhood From 1991.” The New York Times. February 09, 2017. Accessed February 11, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/02/09/world/middleeast/document-elbarasse-search-3.html>.

¹⁴ ICNA Members’ Handbook. 2010. <https://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/misc/475.pdf>

¹⁵ Schwartz, Stephen. “The Road from Riyadh to Beslan.” The Weekly Standard. September 11, 2004. Accessed February 11, 2019. <https://www.weeklystandard.com/stephen-schwartz/the-road-from-riyadh-to-beslan>.

¹⁶ ICNA West Leadership Development Seminar. <https://web.archive.org/web/20120911223414/http://icnasc.org/programs/lds200310.pdf>

¹⁷ “CAIR Protests Saudi Radical’s Exclusion From U.S.” The Investigative Project on Terrorism. Accessed February 12, 2019. <https://www.investigativeproject.org/3864/cair-protests-saudi-radical-exclusion-from-us>.

of Islam in America: the Quest for Social Justice” in observance of Black History Month. Griggs spoke at the University of Colorado’s Denver and Boulder Campuses, at the University of Denver, and at Colorado State University.¹⁸ In his speech at the University of Colorado, Denver, he began by describing the United States as a country rife with “neo-Nazis goose-stepping through the streets” and an “explosion in the membership of the Ku Klux Klan,” before going on to suggest that the remedy to such American political polarization can historically be found in an Islamic society¹⁹ – an allusion to ICNA’s self-described greater interest.

Imam Griggs is also a longtime friend and vocal supporter of Jamil al Amin (A.K.A. H. Rap Brown), a former Black Panther-turned-extremist-Imam who is currently serving a life sentence for the murder of Atlanta Police Deputy Richard Kinchen and the attempted murder of Officer Aldranon English.²⁰

Griggs is a vocal supporter of a popular conspiracy theory which suggests that despite being found guilty of all 13 charges against al Amin, the U.S. government arrested him because of a vendetta against him for having participated in the Civil Rights Movement.²¹ In 2016, ICNA’s Council for Social Justice (ICNA-CSJ) launched an online petition demanding al Amin’s immediate release from prison.²² Decades earlier in 1997, one ICNA convention in Pittsburgh featured Khalid Griggs speaking alongside Jamil al-Amin to an audience of 3,000-4,000 attendees. Also on the panel for the ICNA event was Siraj Wahhaj, a radical imam with a long record of endorsing violence,²³ who once served as a “character witness” for 1993 World Trade Center bombing conspiracy leader Omar Abdelrahman.²⁴

¹⁸ ICNA CO Facebook. “Events” https://www.facebook.com/pg/icnaco/events/?ref=page_internal

¹⁹ “ICNA Colorado.” Facebook. Accessed February 12, 2019. <https://www.facebook.com/icnaco/videos/418840738571892/>. Livestream of Khalid Griggs’s speech at CU Denver.

²⁰ Pressley, Sue Anne. “Ex-Black Panther Convicted Of Murder.” The Washington Post. March 10, 2002. Accessed February 12, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2002/03/10/ex-black-panther-convicted-of-murder/45115cdd-4164-455e-9a1a-eb51891dc996/?utm_term=.6262c9e4cf78.

²¹ “The Conspiracy of Jamil al-Amin” Khalid Griggs. Audio lecture archived at [http://wr5.aswatalislam.net/data2012/Lectures/Other%20Lectures/Khalid%20Griggs%20-%20Imam%20Jamil%20Victim%20of%20Conspiracy%20\(www.aswatalislam.net\).mp3](http://wr5.aswatalislam.net/data2012/Lectures/Other%20Lectures/Khalid%20Griggs%20-%20Imam%20Jamil%20Victim%20of%20Conspiracy%20(www.aswatalislam.net).mp3)

²² “Sign Petition: Request Obama to Release Imam Jamil Al-Amin.” ICNA Council for Social Justice. Accessed February 12, 2019. <http://icnacsj.org/2016/12/sign-petition-request-obama-to-release-imam-jamil-al-amin/>.

²³ Swindle, David M. “Silicon Valley-Subsidized Hate Speakers: Siraj Wahhaj.” Middle East Forum. Accessed March 10, 2019. <https://www.meforum.org/6576/svcf-hate-speakers-siraj-wahhaj>.

²⁴ Ali, M. “Muslim American Activism: Annual ICNA Convention Draws More than 3,000.” Washington Report on Middle East Affairs - WRMEA. Accessed February 12, 2019. <https://www.wrmea.org/1997-october-november/muslim-american-activism-annual-icna-convention-draws-more-than-3000.html>.

Decades earlier in the 1970s and 1980s, Imam Griggs belonged to the now-moribund Islamic Party of North America (IPNA), a group whose foundational text, *Taking Islam to the Street: The Da'wah of the Islamic Party of North America*, preaches a version of Islam which is grounded in:

*“the Revolutionary Islamic political and social thoughts of Sayyid Qutb, Qaddafi, Khomeini, and Maududi to the [...] streets of Washington, D.C., New York, Chicago, Cleveland and a dozen other cities.”*²⁵

In 1976, Griggs attended the “Zionism is Racism” conference in Tripoli, where he received \$100,000 from the Qaddafi regime for the purpose of establishing an IPNA headquarters in Washington, D.C.²⁶

Today, ICNA-CO is among the most active Islamic organizations in the Denver-metro area. They regularly hold a number of events at local mosques and frequently set up informational booths at city and state fairs and community events.

Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR): The Council on American Relations (CAIR), founded in 1994, was “established to promote a positive image of Islam and Muslims in America,” to protect Muslims from hate crimes and discrimination, and to present “an Islamic perspective on issues of importance to the American public.”²⁷ Today, CAIR is headquartered in Washington, D.C., and is perhaps the most influential Muslim grassroots organization in American politics.

Since its establishment, CAIR has been linked to a number of Islamist terrorist organizations. Its founders, Nihad Awad, Omar Ahmad, and Rafeeq Jaber all once had close ties to the Islamic Association of Palestine (IAP), a now-defunct group which was established by one senior Hamas operative, Mousa Abu Marzook, as Hamas’s propaganda and recruitment wing in the US.²⁸ Marzook would later provide CAIR with a \$5,000 donation to open its headquarters in Washington, D.C. through his charity organization, the Holy Land Foundation (HLF). HLF has been found guilty of providing direct support to Hamas to the tune of \$12 million and has been

²⁵ "The Problem of a Radical Imam at Wake Forest University." Frontpage Mag. June 23, 2015. Accessed February 12, 2019. <https://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/122886/problem-radical-imam-wake-forest-university-donald-l-woodsmall>.

²⁶ Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck, and Jane I. Smith. *Muslim Minorities in the West: Visible and Invisible*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002. Chapter 5, “Islamic Party in North America: A Quiet Storm of Political Activism.” - Khalid Fattah Griggs

²⁷ "About." CAIR Houston. Accessed March 04, 2019. <http://cairhouston.org/about.htm>.

²⁸ "Profile: Council on American Islamic Relations." Anti-Defamation League. 2015. Accessed March 01, 2019. <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/assets/pdf/israel-international/israel--middle-east/Profile-The-Council-on-American-Islamic-Relations.pdf>.

designated by the US Department of the Treasury's Office as a Specifically Designated Global Terrorist organization.²⁹ When then-President George W. Bush subsequently closed HLF in 2001, CAIR described his decision as "unjust" and "disturbing." During the later 2007 HLF trial, CAIR co-founder Omar Ahmad was named as an unindicted co-conspirator, with prosecutors describing him as a member of the Muslim Brotherhood's Palestine Committee in the US.³⁰

At one 1994 meeting at Barry University, CAIR co-founder Nihad Awad openly stated "I am a supporter of the Hamas movement."³¹ Further evidence submitted in the 2007 Holy Land Foundation trial also reveals that back in 1993, Awad attended a meeting in Philadelphia of Hamas operatives and leaders who were working on a plan to pass off fundraising for Hamas as donations for charity.³²

The long history of links between CAIR and terrorist organizations goes on, but even so, one doesn't need to look that deeply or thoroughly to find evidence of CAIR's extremism. In the wake of 9/11, CAIR and its officials have long maintained a number of conspiracy theories which refuse to directly blame Osama bin Laden for the attacks, and further, suggesting that US foreign policy is dictated by Zionist extremists.³³

CAIR Colorado: CAIR's Colorado chapter is still relatively new, having been officially established in May of 2017. Since then, it has held events in Denver where it makes little effort in concealing its extremist views and its deeper interests. In September 2018, it held an event titled "Faith Led, Justice Driven," a fundraising banquet which featured as guests CAIR co-founder Nihad Awad, and the director of CAIR's Florida chapter, Hassan Shibly.³⁴

Awad's history of extremism, anti-Semitism, and links to terrorist organizations is well documented. The same is true of the other speaker at the banquet, Hassan Shibly. Shibly also

²⁹ "Federal Judge Hands Downs Sentences in Holy Land Foundation Case." The United States Department of Justice. September 16, 2014. Accessed March 04, 2019. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/federal-judge-hands-downs-sentences-holy-land-foundation-case>.

³⁰ Gerstein, Josh. "Report: Feds Close Probe of CAIR Founder." POLITICO. April 15, 2011. Accessed March 04, 2019. <https://www.politico.com/blogs/under-the-radar/2011/04/report-feds-close-probe-of-cair-founder-035045>.

³¹ "CAIR's Awad: In Support of the Hamas Movement." The Investigative Project on Terrorism. Accessed March 04, 2019. <https://www.investigativeproject.org/223/cairs-awad-in-support-of-the-hamas-movement>.

³² McCarthy, Andrew C. "The Roots of CAIR's Intimidation Campaign." National Review. April 19, 2014. Accessed March 04, 2019. <https://www.nationalreview.com/2014/04/roots-cairs-intimidation-campaign-andrew-c-mccarthy/>.

³³ Emerson, Steven. "Part 5: Quick To Defend Alleged Terrorists, CAIR Even Questioned Al Qaeda 9/11 Role." The Investigative Project on Terrorism. Accessed March 04, 2019. <https://www.investigativeproject.org/629/quick-to-defend-alleged-terrorists-cair>.

³⁴ Kalam, Ahnaf. "Former Denver Broncos Star Legitimizes CAIR." Counter-Islamist Grid. Accessed March 04, 2019. <https://counterislamist.org/former-denver-broncos-star-legitimizes-cair/>.

shares Awad's support for Hamas. In the past, he has publicly showed his support for the Palestinian terrorist, Marwan Barghout, who is serving five consecutive life sentences for five murders and a whole range of terrorism-related charges.³⁵ Shibly, in 2014, also co-sponsored a pro-Hamas rally outside Miami's Israeli embassy where attendees chanted "we are Hamas!" and "let's go Hamas!"³⁶

In one Facebook post 2009, Shibly wrote that homosexuality is "a quick way to earn God's wrath," further elaborating in a later post that:

*"if God says marriage is solely between a man and a woman, or, if he permits polygamy, then so be it. Who are we to question God? A slave has no authority to question the King in his own kingdom."*³⁷

Shibly also shares Awad's anti-Semitic views and his conspiracy-peddling about the state of Israel. In a different post from 2009, Shibly shared a series of photos from Israel and the Palestinian Territories juxtaposed alongside images of the Nazis and the Holocaust with the caption "Grandchildren of the Holocaust are doing to the Palestinians what the Nazis did to them."³⁸



In addition to his extreme and intolerant views towards Jews and homosexuals, Shibly also advocates violence against other Muslims. Shibly has vocally endorsed the global Islamist organization, Khatm Nubuwwa (KN), a group which is actively dedicated to inciting hatred and violence against Ahmadiyya Muslims, a minority sect within Islam often targeted by extremists who consider them to be apostates and heretics.³⁹

³⁵ "CAIR in Georgia, as Pro-Hamas as Ever" The American Spectator. Accessed March 04, 2019. <https://spectator.org/cair-in-georgia-as-pro-hamas-as-ever/>.

³⁶ "Why CAIR Leader Hassan Shibly Fears a Terror Designation for Muslim Brotherhood." Frontpage Mag. May 25, 2017. Accessed March 04, 2019. <https://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/266782/why-cair-leader-hassan-shibly-fears-terror-joe-kaufman>.

³⁷ Kalam, Ahnaf. "Former Denver Broncos Star Legitimizes CAIR." Counter-Islamist Grid. Accessed March 04, 2019. <https://counterislamist.org/former-denver-broncos-star-legitimizes-cair/>.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Westrop, Sam. "Leading American Islamist Endorses Violent Anti-Ahmadi Group." Middle East Forum. Accessed March 04, 2019. <https://www.meforum.org/islamist-watch/54371/leading-american-islamist-endorses-violent-anti>.

At that same banquet in Denver, CAIR Colorado presented Nadeen Ibrahim with its 2018 Call to Service Award.⁴⁰

Not only are the affiliations and activities of CAIR and its board members antithetical to the goals of CVE, but CAIR has also vocally expressed its opposition to the existence of any CVE program,⁴¹ which it believes wrongly singles out and targets Muslim Americans. But CAIR's history of creating distrust towards law enforcement amongst Muslim communities is long and well documented. In a number of past campaigns and pieces of media, CAIR has been a vocal advocate of a conspiracy theory which suggests that the informants for the FBI and US law enforcement are working to wrongly entrap Muslims, even going as far as suggesting that FBI agents are secret agents of the Israeli MOSSAD.⁴²

CAIR's goals of creating distrust between Muslim communities and law enforcement, its links to terrorism, and its opposition to the existence of a CVE program should all be reason for concern with the appointment of Nadeen Ibrahim. A decade ago, even the FBI severed its ties with CAIR over its support for Hamas.⁴³

Islamic Relief: Islamic Relief Worldwide is one the world's largest Islamic charities with branches in over 20 countries. It reports an income of hundreds of millions of dollars, funded largely by Western governments.⁴⁴ Because of its strong ties to Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood, the United Arab Emirates and Israel have designated the charity to be a financier of terrorism.⁴⁵ In 2005, Islamic Relief was accused by Russian authorities of supporting Islamist terrorism in Chechnya. In 2016, HSBC Banks shut down Islamic Relief's accounts.⁴⁶ The following year, the government of Bangladesh banned Islamic Relief from working with Rohingya refugees over concerns with radicalization.⁴⁷

⁴⁰ Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/msaaauraria/permalink/1795782203874846/>

⁴¹ "CAIR ISLAM-OPED: Government's Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Approach Continues to Single Out Muslims." CAIR. Accessed March 04, 2019. https://www.cair.com/cair_islam_oped_government_s_countering_violent_extremism_cve_approach_continues_to_single_out_muslims.

⁴² Emerson, Steve. "CAIR: Muslims Should Resist the FBI." Newsmax. May 11, 2011. Accessed March 04, 2019. <https://www.newsmax.com/emerson/cair-muslims-fbi/2011/05/11/id/395939/>.

⁴³ Abrams, Joseph. "FBI Cuts Ties With CAIR Following Terror Financing Trial." Accessed March 10, 2019. <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/fbi-cuts-ties-with-cair-following-terror-financing-trial>.

⁴⁴ Westrop, Sam. "Islamic Relief Is a Cog in a Dangerous Machine." The National. July 03, 2018. Accessed March 07, 2019. <https://www.thenational.ae/opinion/comment/islamic-relief-is-a-cog-in-a-dangerous-machine-1.746636>.

⁴⁵ Westrop, Sam. "Islamic Relief: Charity, Extremism & Terror." Middle East Forum. Accessed March 07, 2019. <https://www.meforum.org/7403/islamic-relief-charity-extremism-terror>.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Its board members and trustees include: its founder, Hany El-Banna, a Muslim Brotherhood member and supporter of Hamas; its co-founder, Essam El Haddad, former foreign policy advisor to Mohamed Morsi's then-Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt; the chairman of its USA branch, Khaled Lamada, a Muslim Brotherhood lobbyist and Hamas supporter; and Ahmed Al-Rawi, who was named as the Muslim Brotherhood's "main declared British affiliate," and who, in 2014, signed a declaration advocating jihad against US and UK forces in Iraq; among others individuals with extremist connections.⁴⁸

From 2014 to 2018, Nadeem Ibrahim was the Colorado volunteer contact for Islamic Relief USA. According to her LinkedIn profile, she:

*"Recruited and coordinated volunteers for Islamic Relief USA Colorado events, served as committee core member for charity events that yielded more than \$75,000 in donations, assisted in the creation of the Colorado Islamic Relief USA Disaster Response Team, and facilitated networking opportunities for the national staff with local Muslim leaders."*⁴⁹

Muslim Student Association (MSA): While a student at CU Denver, Nadeen was the president of the Colorado University Muslim Students Association (MSA)⁵⁰, a campus organization affiliated with MSA National, a group with longtime ties to the Muslim Brotherhood since its founding in 1963 by Muslim Brotherhood members.⁵¹ In 1986, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, was a member of MSA at North Carolina A&T.⁵² In the 1990s, Anwar al-Awlaki, the Yemeni al-Qaeda cleric who helped orchestrate the 2009 Fort Hood massacre, the 2009 underwear-bomber plot, and the attempted Times Square bombing of 2010, served as president of MSA at Colorado State University. There are countless other instances of MSA officials and members being linked to Islamist terror groups since MSA's founding.⁵³

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Nadeen Ibrahim on LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nadeen-ibrahim-465534a9/>

⁵⁰ "Vigil Held for College Students Shot in Chapel Hill - My Met Media." The Student Voice of MSU Denver. Accessed March 07, 2019. <https://www.mymetmedia.com/the-metropolitan/vigil-held-for-college-students-shot-in-chapel-hill/>.

⁵¹ "The Muslim Brotherhood's Muslim Students' Association: What Americans Need to Know." Center for Security Policy. May 01, 2018. Accessed March 07, 2019. <https://www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/2018/04/29/the-muslim-brotherhoods-muslim-students-association-what-americans-need-to-know/>.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Poole, Patrick. "Muslim Student Group Graduates To Outright Terror Recruitment." Accessed March 10, 2019. <https://pjmedia.com/homeland-security/muslim-student-group-graduates-to-outright-terror-recruitment/>.

The MSA chapter at Auraria Campus, of which Nadeen was president, helped to co-organize the previously mentioned ICNA event on campus which featured Khalid Griggs.

MSA Auraria also holds events in partnership with the Colorado Muslims Community Center (CMCC),⁵⁴ a local Islamic center owned and operated by the radical imam, Karim Abuzaid. Abuzaid advocates openly during his sermons extremist ideologies such as that fornicators should be flogged, and adulterers stoned; that AIDS is god's punishment for homosexuality;⁵⁵ that Jerusalem will one day "come back to the Muslims"; and that Jews are the enemies of Muslims, among other extreme beliefs.⁵⁶

Further concerns with Nadeen Ibrahim: In addition to the number of extremist-linked groups Nadeen Ibrahim is associated with, her own positions and demonstrated activities are also counterproductive to the proposed goals of CVE. Since as far back as 2014, Nadeen, in conjunction with the local BDS movement, has regularly organized anti-Israel demonstrations in Downtown Denver. At these demonstrations, hundreds of protesters take to the streets chanting such anti-Israel, pro-Hamas slogans as "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free,"⁵⁷ – a reference to the land between River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea, effectively denying the right to Jewish self-determination and calling for a full removal of Jews from the region.

Nadeen Ibrahim's name also appears on a list of signatories to an open letter opposing and boycotting the Muslim Leadership Initiative (MLI).⁵⁸ According to its website, MLI is aimed at

*"...build[ing] relationships of understanding, respect, and trust between North American Muslim and Jewish communities. Through a rigorous academic curriculum and exposure to diverse narratives, MLI seeks to expand participants' critical understanding of the complex religious, political, and socioeconomic issues facing people in Israel and Palestine. The program invites North American Muslims to explore how Jews understand Judaism, Israel, and Jewish peoplehood."*⁵⁹

⁵⁴ "MSA Auraria." Event. Facebook. Accessed March 14, 2019. <https://www.facebook.com/events/2233602806915167/>

⁵⁵ Kalam, Ahnaf. "Censoring Moderate Muslims." Islamist Watch. Accessed March 14, 2019. <https://www.meforum.org/islamist-watch/53170/censoring-moderate-muslims>.

⁵⁶ "FSWC Condemns Violent Antisemitism Allegedly Promoted by Imam Coming to Toronto." FSWC. Accessed March 14, 2019. <https://www.friendsofsimonwiesenthalcenter.com/news/fswc-condemns-violent-antisemitism-allegedly-promoted-by-imam-coming-to-toronto>.

⁵⁷ Ashton, Dave. Morning Magazine Radio Broadcast 12/14/2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQFIUor4Ftw>

⁵⁸ "Say No to Faithwashing: Boycott Muslim Leadership Initiative." Boycottmli.wordpress.com. February 18, 2015. Accessed March 07, 2019. <https://boycottmli.wordpress.com/2015/01/14/say-no-to-faithwashing-boycott-muslim-leadership-initiative/>.

⁵⁹ Sharonet. "Muslim Leadership Initiative." Faculty - Shalom Hartman Institute. Accessed March 07, 2019. https://hartman.org.il/Programs_Landing_Page.asp?Cat_Id=517.

Also on the list of signatories are Omar Suleiman, an Islamist hate-preacher;⁶⁰ Hatem Bazian, the radical UC Berkeley professor who has publicly and repeatedly called for a “violent Intifada in the US”;⁶¹ the University of South Florida professor, Sami Al-Arian, a longtime Muslim Brotherhood member who was the North American leader for the US State Department designated terrorist organization, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and who has since been deported to Turkey;⁶² the anti-Semite and Hezbollah supporter Abbas Hamideh;⁶³ and over 200 other signatories including dozens of other extremists. Also on the list are ICNA and the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Muslim Americans Society (MAS).

Nadeen Ibrahim also organizes the Muslim Youth Empowerment Conference here in Denver.⁶⁴ The most recent event was co-sponsored by the Muslim Americans Society (MAS), an organization founded by members of the Muslim Brotherhood which, despite its claims to the contrary, continues to operate as one of the main US branches of the Brotherhood.⁶⁵ Even on MAS’s official website, it promotes publications authored by or advocating the beliefs of Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, and by the infamous radical cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Swindle, David M. "The Worst of Omar Suleiman." Middle East Forum. Accessed March 10, 2019. <https://www.meforum.org/islamist-watch/51455/the-worst-of-omar-suleiman>.

⁶¹ Harris, Jonathan Calt. "A Berkeley Prof's "Intifada" Against America." Middle East Forum. Accessed March 07, 2019. <https://www.meforum.org/593/a-berkeley-profs-intifada-against-america>.

⁶² "Sami Al-Arian: Farewell to a Tenured Terrorist." Frontpage Mag. June 23, 2015. Accessed March 07, 2019. <https://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/250865/sami-al-arian-farewell-tenured-terrorist-john-perazzo>.

⁶³ "Abbas Hamideh." Anti-Defamation League. Accessed March 07, 2019. <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/abbas-hamideh>.

⁶⁴ "Colorado Muslim Youth Empowerment: Challenges of Muslim Youth Today." Colorado Muslims Network. Accessed March 07, 2019. <https://www.coloradomuslimsnetwork.com/colorado-muslim-youth-empowerment-challenges-of-muslim-youth-today/>.

⁶⁵ TESTIMONY for Hearing before: The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on National Security “The Muslim Brotherhood’s Global Threat” Submitted by Dr. M. ZUHDI JASSER PRESIDENT, AMERICAN ISLAMIC FORUM FOR DEMOCRACY July 11, 2018. <https://web.archive.org/web/20180712153422/https://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Jasser-AIFD-Statement-Muslim-Brotherhood-7-11.pdf>

⁶⁶ "MAS Projects." Muslim American Society. Accessed March 07, 2019. <http://www.muslimamericansociety.org/what-we-do/mas-projects/>.

Policy Suggestions:

- First and foremost, Denver Police Department should reconsider Nadeen Ibrahim and Colorado Muslims Connection as the designated actors in charge of community outreach for CVE. Her activities and affiliations demonstrate that her ambitions and ideals are at odds with the intended outcome of CVE.
- CVE should be modified or restructured to focus on countering local radicalizing forces within the local community. This would include the following components: 1) Community Outreach and Partnership; 2) Research, Education & Training; 3) Countering Propaganda and Radical Narratives.

Community Outreach & Partnership: In order to communicate and foster a productive relationship with the Muslim communities within Denver, a functional outreach program must be implemented. This program should aim to do several things: 1) Designate an individual, group, or organization of *moderate* Muslims to act as representative liaisons between law enforcement and at-risk communities; 2) The designated liaison(s) will form a coalition of anti-Islamist Muslims to challenge and compete against prominent local Islamist organizations and networks; 3) Hold regular meetings between Denver officials, the designated liaison(s), and members of Muslim communities to identify threats and combat extremist networks.

While it may be difficult to designate a moderate Muslim community partner, especially given the seemingly-benign methods by which radical Islamists lawfully operate, there are a number of basic criteria for determining whether an individual or an organization in question is a subscriber to radical and extreme ideologies. DPD should not include in its CVE efforts: ⁶⁷

- Individuals or organizations that condone violence against civilians;
- Individuals or organizations that advocate for attacks against the US and its allies;
- Individuals or organizations that support or make excuses for designated terrorist groups;
- Organizations designated by the US or its allies as designated terrorist groups;
- Organizations which provide platforms to individuals who incite violence, particularly against non-Muslims and Muslim minority sects;
- Individuals and organizations who do not recognize the rights of Sufis, Ahmadiyya Muslims, and other minority Muslim sects to identify as Muslims;
- People or organizations that incite violence and hatred against Muslim apostates;
- Individuals or organizations that are funded or linked to US designated state sponsors of terrorism;
- Organizations that fail or refuse to disclose *all* of their foreign funding.

⁶⁷ Westrop, Sam. "Rethinking Counter-Extremism." Middle East Forum November 1, 2018.

Research, Education & Training: CVE must also include a provision which provides appropriate training and education to both law enforcement and Muslim community members that is designed to identify foreign and domestic Islamist organizations and the front organizations under whose guise they operate. This would include the following components: 1) a team of researchers, including members of the Muslim community, to help identify radical networks linked to schools, charities, non-profits, grassroots organizations, and other organizations – both online, and on the ground; 2) Individuals from within the Muslim community to identify any imams, clerics, mosques, and religious centers that preach extremist Islamist ideology, and separating them from the ones that preach moderate, non-politicized Islam; 3) A training program which would equip law enforcement, as well as the public, to better understand the warning signs of Islamist radicalization and would prepare them for early-intervention practices.

Unless competing, extremist narratives are delegitimized, moderate voices will not be allowed an opportunity to become the representative examples for Muslims in the US. The objective of this component is to effectively delegitimize mosques, religious centers, and clerics who preach Islamist extremism while simultaneously legitimizing and mainstreaming the peaceful, moderate religious centers, allowing them to reclaim their positions as the representative voices for American Muslims.

Countering Propaganda and Extremist Narratives: To actively *counter* violent extremism, the CVE program must intervene while the would-be violent extremists are still at the stage of non-violent radicalization. In order to successfully prevent at-risk members of the Muslim community from becoming radicalized towards violent Islamist extremism, CVE should include provisions to achieve the following goals: 1) The creation of a Muslim-led initiative to create counter narratives to Islamist propaganda; 2) The implementation of a research-based strategy to successfully communicate with at-risk youth who are susceptible to online radicalization via social media.

Conclusion:

In order to successfully identify and counter the threat of violent Islamist extremism, one of the only solutions is to empower the moderate Muslims and ensure that their voice is allowed to drown out the competing radical, extremist narratives within Denver. The implementation of any CVE program is certainly a good first step, but in order to succeed in its objectives, it must reject many of the fallacious and illogical foundational premises and questionable partnership choices advocated by the previous CVE proposal.

In order to assist Denver Police in the structuring and implementation of a successful CVE program, the Counter-Islamist Grid is available as a resource to provide expert briefings and consultations on radical Islamist networks in Denver, the US, and abroad.

You can contact the Counter-Islamist Grid in either of the following ways:

Kyle Shideler

Director

Director@counterislamist.org

(215) 709-0770

Ahnaf Kalam

Denver Associate

ahnafkalam@gmail.com

(720) 975-5068